

## History of Plague

The Plague hit Europe in the 6th century (the Plague of Justinian) and again in the 14th century (the Black Death). The Plague of Justinian is believed to have killed about 25 million people while the Black Death is believed to have killed over 75 million people worldwide. Today, the World Health Organization reports 1,000-3,000 cases per year throughout the world.

## Plague in California

Plague was first documented in California in 1900. The last urban outbreak was in Los Angeles in 1924-1925. Since then, human plague in the United States occurs mostly in rural areas infecting an average of 10-15 people per year.

Those most at risk of catching plague are people that live, work, or visit areas where plague is found. Plague in California occurs in the foothills, mountains, and along the coast.



## Control Plague

State and local vector control programs monitor plague activity. Rangers and park employees are trained to watch for sick or dead rodents.

When plague is found in an area, park rangers or health officials will post warnings. People should use caution when entering these areas.

Flea powder may also be used to control fleas carrying plague. Flea powder is applied into rodent burrows or manmade traps. Rodents get the powder on their fur after entering the traps and carry it back to their burrow, killing fleas inside the burrow. This effective method does not harm rodents.

## General Precautions

- Avoid known plague areas
- Avoid contact with wild animals and their fleas, especially sick or dead rodents
- Use caution when handling a sick pet that has been in an infected area
- Avoid face-to-face contact with sick pets or sick humans
- Report sick or dead rodents to park rangers or the Vector Control Program
- Contact your doctor immediately if you become ill within 7 days after being in a plague-infected area

For more information about hantavirus or other vector-borne diseases, contact San Diego County's Vector Control Program.

*County of San Diego*



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# PLAGUE

## Protect Yourself and Your Pets



County of San Diego  
**VECTOR CONTROL PROGRAM**



## Facts About Plague

- Plague is a highly infectious disease caused by a bacteria
- Plague is primarily carried by rodents
- Humans and pets can also become infected by plague
- Humans and pets are infected by the bite of an infected flea
- People that live in or visit areas with infected wild rodents are at greater risk

## Symptoms of Plague

In humans, the initial symptoms of plague include chills, fever, headache, muscle aches, weakness and most commonly swollen and tender lymph nodes, called "buboes." There are 3 forms of plague:

- Bubonic plague: Infection of the lymph glands
- Pneumonic plague: Infection of the lungs; this form can be spread person-to-person
- Septicemic plague: Infection of the blood

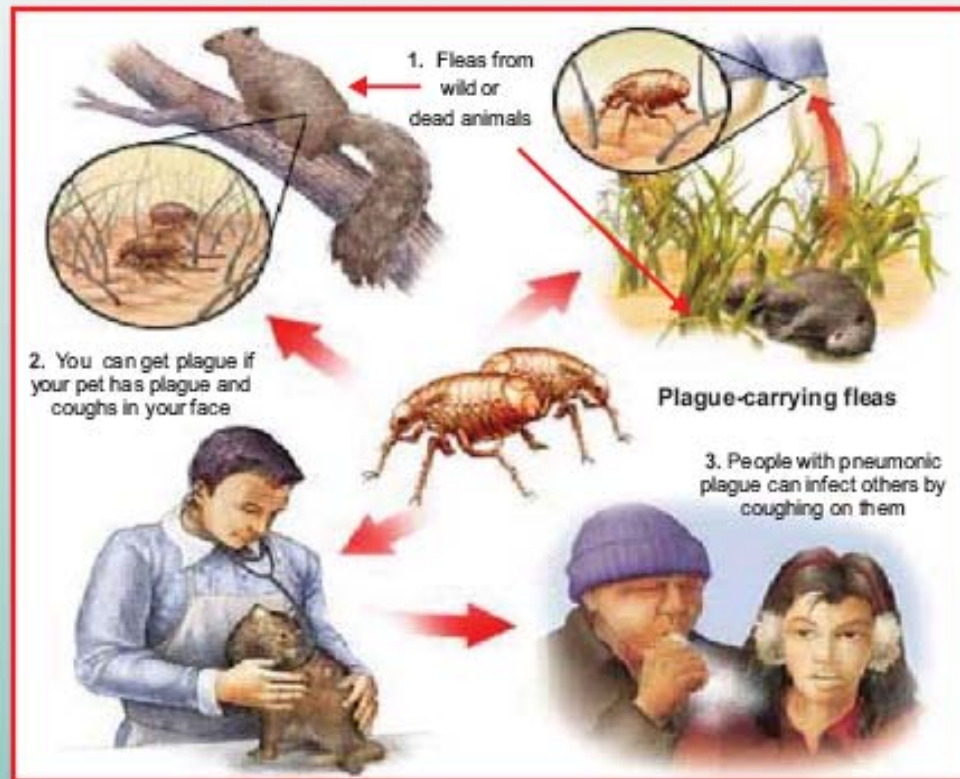
Plague symptoms usually occur 2-6 days after coming in contact with the bacteria. Plague is treatable when found early. If not treated early, plague could result in severe illness or death.



Swollen lymph node or "Bubo" on the leg

## HOW TO AVOID THE PLAGUE

People can get plague in many ways:



1. **Flea Bites from Infected Rodents:** Hungry fleas will leave a sick or dead rodent to find new blood meals from humans. When a flea bites a human it can transmit the bacteria into humans.

2. **Direct Contact with Sick or Dead Animals:**

- Plague bacteria in the blood, urine, tissues, or saliva of an infected animal can enter cuts and abrasions on human hands
- In cases of pneumonic plague, when the pet sneezes or coughs, the bacteria can become airborne and be inhaled by humans

## Do Not Bring Fleas Home!

It is best to leave pets at home.

If pets can not be left at home, use flea control products on pets before taking them to a known plague area. Confine pets or keep them on a leash, so that they can not explore rodent burrows. Animals with plague may become very ill, stop eating and have a fever. Swollen lymph nodes may appear, generally in the neck area.

Inform your veterinarian if a pet becomes sick following a visit to a plague-infected area. Domestic animals, such as cats, and rats, can also carry plague. Their infections pose a direct threat to humans. These animals can bring infected fleas into the house increasing the human's risk of flea bites.



Ground Squirrel

The most common wild rodents that can carry the disease are ground squirrels, chipmunks, wood rats and mice.